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ABSTRACT

A study investigating poetry in elementary school programs had three purposes: (1) to examine young children's (K-3) poetry concepts and attitudes; (2) to develop a poetry program for use by teachers; and (3) to field-test that program to determine its effects on poetry concepts and attitudes. Three hundred forty K-3 students were pretested and posttested with the "Poetry Concepts and Attitudes Questionnaire." The Daily Oral Reading of Poetry program was developed. An active research design, involving 20 classroom teachers, was chosen to field-test the 4-week program in elementary classrooms. Results indicated that most young children had definite concepts about poetry, though with many children they were not well-developed. Young children also exhibited a positive attitude about poetry. Significant grade level differences existed and program participation significantly affected concepts and attitudes. (Seven tables of data are included; two appendixes containing a poetry concepts and attitudes questionnaire and guidelines for conducting daily oral poetry reading, and 45 references are attached.) (Author/KEH)

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YOUNG CHILDREN'S CONCEPTS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Many educators support the goal of developing an understanding and appreciation of poetry in elementary school programs, yet little research exists concerning children's poetry concepts and attitudes and the effects of teaching of poetry. This study had three purposes: (a) examine young children's (K-3) poetry concepts and attitudes, (b) develop a poetry program for use by teachers, and (c) field-test that program to determine its effect on poetry concepts and attitudes. Three hundred and forty K-3 students were pretested and posttested with the Poetry Concepts and Attitudes Questionnaire. The Daily Oral Reading of Poetry program was developed. An active research design, involving twenty classroom teachers, was chosen to field-test the four-week program in elementary classrooms. Results indicated that most young children had definite concepts about poetry, though with many children they were not well-developed. Young children also exhibited a positive attitude about poetry. Significant grade level differences existed and program participation significantly affected concepts and attitudes.

Introduction

> Let us intervene. Let us pretend, if we must, that ourselves, prosaic adults, feel a greater need, a wilder enthusiasm for that fugitive other language than we may rightly claim. Let us keep that birthright vital in the mind and memory and in the mouth and ear of the children -- even though, for whatever reason, we have let it die in ourselves. (Farber, 1979, p. 22)

The Nature of the Problem

The fugitive other language that Farber eloquently pleads for is the language of poetry. The efforts to keep poetry alive in the lives of most people have failed. Painter (1970) observed that most people completely drop poetry from their lives without any reservations. Recent surveys confirm the observation that relatively few adults read poetry (Lefcowitz, 1983; Webb-Hearsey, 1982).

One possible reason for the small number of lifelong readers of poetry could be the apparent lack of attention given to poetry within elementary school curricula. Ironically despite the schools' inability to foster lasting positive concepts and attitudes about poetry, the goal to accomplish just that is articulated on many educational fronts. From a limited survey conducted for this study, the goal was apparent in the commercial materials used in reading and language arts instruction,

in the state and local curricular guides which shape that instruction, in the professional organizations that influence that instruction, and from the educational authorities most knowledgeable about that instruction (Ford, 1987).

The goal of poetry instruction has been clearly articulated and its worthiness is defensible both as an end in itself and as an avenue for other learning. Poetry is a unique genre both in its form and in its content. For this reason, there is value in studying poetry for poetry's sake; as well as, using poetry as a special tool for other learning.

Smith (1985) stated that explaining the value of using poetry was not nearly as difficult as explaining why it was used so infrequently. Many have documented the neglect or infrequent use of poetry in elementary classrooms (Hayford, 1982; Huck, 1976; McCall, 1979), but that is only one part of the problem. When poetry is used in the classroom, practices are often "unimaginative, repetitive, burdensome, and joyless" (Baskin, Harris, & Salley, 1976, p. 260). With the combination of infrequent and improper use of poetry in elementary classrooms, it should not be a surprise that the schools have fallen short of achieving this very worthwhile goal.

The Need for the Study

It is quite clear that the goal of developing an understanding and appreciation of poetry is not being accomplished by elementary schools -- despite the fact that the goal is being articulated and the worthiness of the goal is defensible. Ball (1979) stated that if poetry was to survive in school programs, teachers need to be provided with successful methods for teaching poetry. This may be especially true for the teachers of young children who need methods to sustain and nurture an existing love of poetry in the children with whom they work.

In designing such a program, it would be important to learn about the concepts and attitudes which young children have about poetry for insights to be considered when designing an appropriate poetry program. A review of related literature, unfortunately, revealed that very little research existed in this area. With the exception of poetry preferences, young children's poetry concepts and attitudes have not been the focus of much research (Cullingford, 1979; Huettenmueller, 1974). The same can be said of instructional poetry programs. A review of the literature revealed that research on teaching poetry at the elementary level has also been virtually ignored (Huettenmueller, 1974). This was especially true for the

primary grades. Not one of the few studies conducted in this area focused specifically on the primary grades.

It was clearly apparent that the need existed for research in the area of poetry instruction for young children. The study reported here was conducted to begin to fulfill that need. The purpose of the study was three-fold: (a) to examine the concepts and attitudes that young children (K-3) have about poetry, (b) to develop an instructional poetry program which could be used with young children by teachers, and (c) to field-test that program to determine whether the concepts and attitudes of young children about poetry could be altered.

Literature review

Benton (1978) defined four critical factors that affect the quality of poetry instruction: the children, the poems, the teachers, and the pedagogy. This brief review of the literature focuses on those four factors.

The Children

With the exception of extensive research about children's poetry preferences, Cullingford (1979) concluded that the research about children's attitudes toward poetry is disappointing. Most of the literature chooses to describe a general level of like or dislike in

regards to poetry. The research seemed to confirm that young children enter elementary school with a positive attitude toward poetry (Fisher & Natarella, 1982); however, it also documented a decline in the preference expressed for poetry as students progressed through the elementary grades (O'Bruba, 1975; Rubin, 1980; Terry & Fisher, 1982).

Research on children's poetry concepts was even more limited. Only Cullingford's (1979) study analyzed elementary students' poetry concepts. He surveyed students by asking questions which examined how recently the students had read poetry, where they had learned about poetry, why they read poetry, and whether they could recite a poem. Though the study did provide some insights into what this group thought about poetry, this study barely began to fill the void in the literature. Additional research was needed.

The Poems

If desired outcomes are to be achieved from an instructional poetry program, then the poems must be carefully chosen and presented (Lukasevich, 1984). If enjoyment of poetry is a desired outcome, then it is recommended that initial poetry programs should contain poems that will meet the interests and needs of the

children (Lukasevich, 1984; Terry & Fisher, 1982; Travers, 1984). The use of poorly selected poems may prevent the attainment of that desired outcome (Dillon, 1978; Huck, 1976).

To rely solely on teacher selections may not be the best way to select poems which would appeal to children. From her review of the research, Huettenmueller (1974) concluded that "research has shown a low correlation between teacher and pupil poetry preferences" (p. 31). The literature suggested that a better way to identify these poems may be to use the extensive body of poetry preference research to guide decisions about poem selections.

Since the 1920's, the most extensively researched area related to children and poetry is the area of children's poetry preferences (Dunn, 1921; MacKintosh, 1924). The review of this research has led to the conclusion that characteristics of preferences have been quite stable through the years (Huck, 1976). Terry (1974) best summarized the characteristics of poems preferred by children. In a national survey conducted among students (grades four through sixth), children indicated a preference for the forms of limericks and narratives; subjects that focused on humorous or nonsense situations,

familiar experiences, or animals; poems with rhyme, rhythm, and sound devices; and contemporary poems. Terry's conclusions continued to support previous research and subsequent research has supported her findings (Simmons, 1980; Ingham, 1980).

Most preference studies have focused on older students. Fisher and Natarella (1982) conducted one of the few studies to focus directly on the poetry preferences of students in grades one through three. Except for two minor differences, the conclusions of their study of young children's preferences seemed to confirm results cited in studies of older students' preferences.

Terry and Fisher (1982) hypothesized that failing to capitalize on children's preferences may cause some of the problems with elementary poetry instruction. By examining the preference literature, a clear set of selection guidelines can be developed to assist teachers in choosing poems that will appeal to young children.

The Teacher

The teacher is the third critical variable. Haynes suggested that the teacher was the one main influencing factor on whether poetry was liked or not (in Travers, 1984). Many authorities have identified an enthusiastic teacher as a crucial component in a poetry program

(Hayford, 1982; Mason, 1982; Wallace, 1981; Whitin, 1983). Unfortunately, many educators are not enthusiastic about poetry. Surveys indicate that many educators avoid the teaching of poetry for many reasons (Lukasevich, 1984; Redmond, 1980; Rogers, 1985; Travers, 1984; Webb-Hearsey, 1982). Three primary reasons were cited: (a) the lack of personal experiences with poetry may contribute to a lack of conviction regarding the value of poetry activities as an essential portion of language arts programs (Ball, 1979; Cramer, 1978), (b) previous negative experiences with poetry may further contribute to teachers' infrequent use of the genre (Hopkins, 1972), and (c) teachers may lack knowledge of children's poetry and proper methods of poetry instruction (Benton, 1978; Travers, 1984).

The Pedagogy

The final factor which contributes to the success of an instructional poetry program is the method that is chosen by a teacher to share the poems. One of the primary issues discussed related to the teaching of poetry is whether initial experiences should be more of an aesthetic or academic experience. The literature reveals that many believe the former may be the best way to begin a poetry program (Fox & Merrick, 1981; Rubin, 1980; Wallace, 1981). Some suggest that it is only after children have been

exposed to poetry and begun to enjoy it that more academic poetry activities should be instituted (Harp, 1972; Huck, 1976). Others suggest that some "academic" poetry concepts are best developed through the use of aesthetic poetry experiences (Lukasevich, 1984).

If the initial poetry experience is focused on an aesthetic experience, then three important guidelines should be followed: (a) poetry needs to be shared by being read aloud (Lewis, 1977; Terry & Fischer, 1982; Whitin, 1983), (b) poetry needs to be made available daily (Lukasevich, 1984; Shillington, 1981; Stewig, 1980; Whitin, 1981), and (c) the presentation of the poem should be the central focus of the experience (Huck, 1976; Huettenmueller, 1974; Webb-Hearsey, 1982).

Teaching practices used with poetry identified as contributing to negative feelings about poetry included: critical analysis of poetry through countless questions (Rosenblatt, 1982; Rubin, 1980); forced memorization (Huck, 1976; Rubin, 1980;), used primarily for discussion of/teaching about other topics (Rosenblatt, 1982; Rubin, 1980), improper reading (Rubin, 1980), teaching above students' level of conceptualization (Gutteridge, 1976, Travers, 1984), required performance (Rudie, 1975), and reading too much poetry in one setting (Huck, 1976; Rudie,

1975). Such practices should avoided when designing an instructional poetry program for use with young children.

Procedures

Selection and Description of the Sample

This study was conducted in a rural Iowa school district and involved the use of the K-3 student population in the district's two elementary schools. The initial sample consisted of 340 students. All students in the sample were administered the concepts pretest and 338 students were administered the attitude pretest. (The testing was done during two time periods and two students were absent during the attitude testing.) Normal attritional factors slightly reduce the samples for both the concepts and attitude posttests. Each consisted of 328 students. The investigator randomly selected an equal number of classrooms to receive the treatment. The total number in the treatment group was 181. The total number in the control group was 159.

Experimental Procedures and Materials

Selection of the poems. After reviewing the literature describing young children's poetry preferences, the investigator developed a list of guidelines for the selection of poems which would appeal to young children.

Utilizing these guidelines, the investigator reviewed children's poetry anthologies. The investigator selected 103 poems which seemed to be suitable candidates. These choices were reviewed by two authorities from the field of children's literature to judge whether the poems were suitable for final evaluation by a panel of trained raters. The authorities eliminated thirteen poems. The remaining ninety poems were evaluated by a panel of four trained raters after completing a training program designed to familiarize them with the guidelines and to provide them practice in using the guidlines to rate poems for young children. They were asked to rank each poem from one to five according to the poetry selection guidelines scale. The rankings were compiled for each poem with the highest rated poems selected for inclusion in the treatment program.

Development of the assessment tool. An assessment tool was designed to evaluate young children's concepts and attitudes about poetry. An initial assessment tool was constructed by the investigator. Use of the tool in a pilot study allowed the investigator to evaluate the format, the length, and the content validity of the tool. Results from the pilot study, and subsequent field tests, led to revisions in the tool before it was used in the

final study. (See Appendix A.)

Development of the instructional poetry program. The instructional poetry program designed for field-testing in this study was the four-week Daily Oral Reading of Poetry program. Treatment teachers were actively involved in conducting this program in their classrooms for the field test. All treatment teachers participated in training and were provided with a copy of the Daily Oral Reading of Poetry Program Teacher's Manual (Ford, 1987). The manual was used in conducting the daily lessons of the poetry program. The program incorporated the instructional guidelines for poetry described in the literature review. The program concentrated on the daily oral reading of carefully selected poems by classroom teachers with an emphasis placed on the aesthetic enjoyment of poetry. The specific guidelines used to conduct the daily oral reading of poetry lessons are described in detail in Appendix B.

Experimental Design

A non-equivalent control-group quasi-experimental design was chosen for this study (Borg & Gall, 1983; Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Permission was secured for students to participate in the study. The Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire pretest was administered through individual interviews with students. The

assignment of classrooms as treatment or no-treatment classrooms was done randomly. Five classrooms at each school were designated as treatment classrooms. The remaining classrooms in each school were designated as the control rooms.

On January 12, 1987, the daily oral reading program was initiated in the treatment classrooms. No other alterations were made in the curricula or schedules of either the treatment or control classrooms. An effort was made to make the primary difference between the two groups the variable of whether they were exposed to the four-week daily oral reading poetry program or not. Daily lessons were detailed in the poetry manual for each participating teacher. After being conducted for four weeks, the program was terminated on February 12, 1987. All students were posttested using the Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire following the study's termination.

Analysis of the Data

Primary research questions. Three primary research questions were investigated for this study: (a) In general, what are the concepts and attitudes that young children (K-3) have about poetry? (b) What are the developmental differences and similarities in the concepts and attitudes that young children in grades kindergarten

through third have about poetry? and (c) In general, what effects does a four-week program of daily oral reading of poetry by a classroom teacher have on the concepts and attitudes that young children (K-3) have about poetry? In answering each of the primary research questions, analysis was structured according to a set of secondary research questions based on items from the Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire.

Variables. The following variables can be described for the primary research questions investigated in this study:

1. In investigating the developmental differences and similarities that young children have in their concepts and attitudes, the independent variable was identified as the students' grade level. The dependent variable was the students' concepts and attitudes about poetry as measured by the pretest administration of the questionnaire tool.

2. In investigating the effects that the daily oral reading of poetry program had on the students'concepts and attitudes, the independent variable was identified as the students'assignment to a treatment or no-treatment group. The dependent variable was identified as the changes in the students'concepts and attitudes as measured by the posttest administration of the questionnaire tool.

Null Hypotheses. The following null hypotheses were tested for two of the primary research questions in this study:

1. There is no difference in the concepts and attitudes about poetry as measured by the pretest administration of the poetry questionnaire between students in grade levels kindergarten through third.

2. There is no difference in the concepts and attitudes about poetry as measured by the posttest administration of the poetry questionnaire between the treatment and no-treatment groups.

Statistical Procedures. Most of the data used in this study can be reported as a proportions of young children responding in a certain way. If reporting the results did not involve making a comparison between two or more cases, descriptive statistics were used to present the data. If comparisons of the proportions were needed nonparametric tests for significance were used including: (a) the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test for the Equality of Proportions, (b) the K-Sample Binomial Test for Equality of Proportions, and (c) the McNemar Test for Significant Change (Marascuilo & McSweeney, 1977).

Analysis of the Data

Young Children's Concepts and Attitudes about Poetry

Using the results from the initial administration of the Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire to the total K-3 sample, the first primary research question was examined -- in general, what are the concepts and attitudes that young children have about poetry?

Concepts about poetry. Concept items from the questionnaire provided an overall picture of the concepts that young children have about poetry. The first concept was related to how young children define a poem. In this case, defining a poem meant being able to name an attribute related to poetry. When asked to tell what a poem was, 26% of the young children interviewed were not able to provide a response. The remaining young children were able to provide at least one attribute which could be used in defining a poem. Those children who could not define a poem were also asked to define the alternative phrase "nursery rhyme." Almost 52% of these children were able to define a nursery rhyme. The remaining 48% were unable to define a nursery rhyme, which meant that over 12% of all the young children were unable to define either "poem" or "nursery" rhyme.

In analyzing the frequency of specific attributes that

young children use in defining a poem, eight categories of attributes were identified. Of the total number of attributes used by young children, 33% were classified as characteristics (rhyming); 23% were text features (words, short length, paragraphs); 21% were uses or functions (write, say, read, tell, make up); 14% were analogies (story, song, joke/riddle); 4% were content (about animals, about holidays, make sense, about feelings); 3% were affect (funny or silly, good), 2% were examples (named a poem or poet); and 1% were miscellaneous (has an author/writer).

Results from the next seven concept items from the questionnaire are reported in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 summarizes the proportion of young children able to successfully complete the poetry concept tasks from the questionnaire. Table 2 summarizes the frequency of specific reponses the young children used in answering why they responded in a certain way. For items four through eight, it was possible to examine the cues which led to both correct and incorrect responses. (Responses occuring in more than 5% of the children's explanations are summarized in Table 2. Children may have given more than one reason.)

Table 1 also reported the proportion of young children able to identify a poem and a poet by name. Seventy-two different poems were mentioned by young children. Among

Table 1
Proportion of Young Children Able to Complete Items Related to Poetry Concepts

1. Able to define a poem.		
	Able to identify 74%	Unable to identify 26%
2. Able to identify a difference between a story and a poem.		
	Able to identify 72%	Unable to identify 28%
3. Able to identify a similarity between a story and a poem.		
	Able to identify 65%	Unable to identify 35%
4. Able to identify an orally-read rhymed verse as a poem.		
	Correct (Poem) 77%	Incorrect (Story) 21%
5. Able to identify an orally-read narrative as a story.		
	Correct (Story) 79%	Incorrect (Poem) 20%
6. Able to identify an orally-read unrhymed verse as a poem.		
	Correct (Poem) 61%	Incorrect (Story) 37%
7. Able to identify a visual model of nar text as a story.		
	Correct (Story) 70%	Incorrect (Poem) 29%
8. Able to identify a visual model of verse text as a poem.		
	Correct (Poem) 56%	Incorrect (Story) 43%
9. Able to identify a poem by title.		
	Able to name 41%	Unable to name 59%
10. Able to identify the name of a poet.		
	Able to name 6%	Unable to name 94%

Note. n=340 young children

these were 15 common nursery rhymes. Almost 40% of the young children named a nursery rhyme as their example of a poem. Three nursery rhymes were the most frequently named titles: "Roses are Red," "Jack and Jill," and "Humpty Dumpty."

The most difficult task of the questionnaire was to

Table 2
Frequency of Specific Responses
Related to Poetry Concept Items

2. Specific responses used in identifying a difference between a poem and story.	
Rhyming (presence, degree)	39%
Shorter Length (less quantity)	34%
Content (subject matter, depth)	14%
Text features (arrangement, components)	7%
Uses/purposes	6%
Songlike	6%
n = 245 young children	
3. Specific responses in identifying a similarity between a poem and a story.	
Words (presence of)	31%
Both are created (written, made up, told)	12%
Tells about something	9%
Content (same subject matter, depth, components)	9%
Both are read	8%
Words (same words used)	7%
In a book	6%
n = 221 young children	
4. Specific responses given for why the rhymed verse was identified as poem or a story.	
Correct Students Using Response	
Rhyming (presence, degree and/or location)	75%
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	14%
Short length	12%
n = 262 students	
Incorrect Students Using Response	
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	44%
Delivery (you talked it, fast)	11%
Rhyming (lack of, degree)	11%
Wording ("once upon a time")	7%
Content (subject matter, nature of)	6%
n = 78 students	
5. Specific responses given for why the narrative story was identified as a story or a poem.	
Correct Students Using Response	
Rhyming (lack of, degree)	61%

Table 2 (Continued)
Frequency of Specific Responses
Related to Poetry Concept Items

No response, unclear response, circular reasons	20%
Content (subject matter, nature of, depth)	17%
n = 269 students	
Incorrect Students Using Response	
No reponse, unclear response, circular reasoning	39%
Rhyming (presence of, degree)	19%
Short length	16%
Content (subject matter, nature of)	10%
Words used (different, no words, sounds alike)	7%
Delivery (said words, you sing in it, slow)	6%
n = 68 students	

6. Specific responses given for why the unrhymed verse was identified as a poem or a story.

Correct Students Using Response	
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	32%
Rhyming (presence of, degree of)	32%
Content (subject matter, depth, nature of)	17%
Shorter (length, sentences)	13%
n = 207 students	
Incorrect Students Using Response	
Rhyming (lack of, degree)	46%
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	30%
Content (depth, nature of, subject matter)	9%
n = 126 students	

7. Specific responses given for why the visual model of a page of narrative text was identified as a story or a poem.

Correct Students Using Response	
Longer Length	39%
Rhyming words (lack of, don't look like, number of)	20%
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	14%
Words (quantity and quality)	11%
n = 238 students	
Incorrect Students Using Response	
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	32%
Words (quantity and quality)	16%
Longer length	15%
Rhyming words (presence of, looked like it has, degree)	14%
Text arrangement (had parts, spacing, one page)	8%
n = 99 students	

Table 2 (Continued)
Frequency of Specific Responses
Related to Poetry Concept Items

8. Specific responses given for why the visual model of a multi-stanza poem was identified as a story or a poem.	
Correct Students Using Response	
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	24%
Text Arrangements (different parts, spacing, split up)	20%
Rhyming (looks like, degree)	19%
Shorter Length	12%
Words (quality and quantity)	8%
Paragraphs (presence, size)	7%
n = 190 students	
Incorrect Students Using Response	
No response, unclear response, circular reasons	31%
Rhyming (Lack of)	18%
Longer length	14%
Words (quality and quantity)	10%
Content (different, no riddles, subject matter)	7%
n = 146 students	

identify a poet by name. Only six percent of the young children were able to complete the task. Six poets were identified by the children, but only Robert Louis Stevenson and Shel Silverstein were named by more than one student.

The final two items allowed for an examination of the difference between the number of young children who could identify the name of a story/author compared with the number who could identify the name of a poem/poet. First, it should be noted that 83% of the children were able to identify the name of a story. The results of the McNemar Test indicated a significant difference between the young children's ability

to identify a poem and their ability to identify a story. Likewise the difference between the number of young children who could identify the name of an author (65%) compared with the number who could identify the name of a poet (6%) was significant.

Attitudes about poetry. The results from the paired comparisons attitude measure from the questionnaire provided an overall picture of the attitudes that young children have toward poetry. The investigator asked young children to choose the activity they would prefer to do most among a group of six activities. (See Appendix A.) The frequency of times chosen was tallied for each activity for all the young children in the sample. "Listen to someone read a poem" ranked fourth among the group of six activities. "Try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem" ranked third. The complete ranking of all activities is described in Table 3.

As reported in Table 3, "listen to someone read a poem" was chosen 52% of the time in paired comparisons with the five other school-related activities. As described by Edwards (1957), scale values were computed for the six activities. (See Table 3.) An informal inspection of those values would indicate the frequency that young children chose "listen to someone read a poem" was slightly less than the frequency that young children chose "watch a movie" and

Table 3
The Ranking of Poetry Activities
Among Six School-related Activities
According to the Preferences of Young Children

Activity	Rank	Proportion	Scale Value
Paint a picture/make an art project	1	.60	.620
Watch a movie	2	.58	.576
TRY TO MAKE UP A RHYME/WRITE A POEM	3	.55	.482
LISTEN TO SOMEONE READ A POEM	4	.52	.404
Take a Test	5	.39	.079
Sing a new song/sing with a record	6	.36	.000

Note. n = 338 young children

"paint a picture/make an art project." It was clearly higher than the frequency of young children choosing the activities of singing a song or taking a test. Chosen almost 55% of the time, the same conclusions can be reached about the activity of creating a poem. There seemed to be no major difference in the frequency of choice between creating a poem and listening to someone read a poem.

Grade Level Differences and Similarities in Young Children's Concepts and Attitudes about Poetry

By comparing the results from the four individual grade levels on the pretest administration of the Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire, it was possible to determine the answer to the second primary research question -- what are

the grade level differences and similarities in the concepts and attitudes of young children about poetry?

Grade level differences in on concepts about poetry. Concept items from the questionnaire provided an overall picture of the grade level differences and similarites in the concepts that young children have toward poetry. Table 4 summarizes the results of the number of young children at each grade level who were able to successfully complete the concept items from the questionnaire. The results of the K-Sample Binomial Test for Equality of Proportions, used to test for a significant difference between these grade level proportions, are also reported in Table 4. Furthermore, Table 4 reports the results of subsequent two-by-two comparisons of grades levels using the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test used to indicate significant differences between specific grade levels.

Grade level differences in attitudes about poetry. The results from the paired comparisons attitude measure for each grade level provided an overall picture of the the grade level differences and similarities in the attitudes of young children about poetry. Table 5 summarizes the rankings of each of the six activities by grade levels and the proportions of time chosen for each activity. Using those proportions as a basis of analysis, significant grade level

Table 4
Grade Level Differences in Young Children's
Concepts About Poetry

	K	1	2	3	n
Total n for groups	83	84	91	82	340
1. Able to define a poem.					
Able to define	52%(43)	68%(57)	79%(72)	98%(80)	252
Unable to define	48%(40)	32%(27)	21%(19)	2% (2)	88
Probability of proportions being equal p<.000001					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K					
2. Able to identify a difference between a story and a poem.					
Able to identify	46%(38)	70%(59)	79%(72)	99%(81)	250
Unable to identify	54%(45)	30%(25)	21%(19)	1% (1)	90
Probability of proportions being equal p<.000001					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K, 2>K, 1>K					
3. Able to identify a similarity between a story and a poem.					
Able to identify	47%(39)	62%(52)	69%(63)	89%(73)	227
Unable to identify	53%(44)	38%(22)	31%(28)	11% (9)	113
Probability of proportions being equal p<.000001					
Significant differences: 3>1, 3>K, 2>K, 1>K					
4. Able to identify an orally-read rhymed verse as a poem.					
Correct (Poem)	59%(49)	70%(59)	85%(77)	95%(78)	263
Incorrect (Story)	41%(34)	30%(25)	15%(14)	5% (4)	77
Probability of equality of proportions p<.000001					
Significant differences: 3>1, 3>K, 2>K					
5. Able to identify an orally-read narrative as a story.					
Correct (Story)	59%(49)	80%(67)	86%(78)	91%(75)	269
Incorrect (Poem)	41%(34)	20%(17)	14%(13)	9% (7)	71
Probability of equality of proportions p <.000002					
Significant differences: 3>K, 2>K, 1>K					

Table 4 (Continued)
Grade Level Differences in Young Children's Concepts About Poetry

	K	1	2	3	n
Total n for groups	83	84	91	82	340
6. Able to identify an orally-read unrhymed verse as a poem.					
Correct (Poem)	52%(43)	69%(58)	57%(52)	65%(53)	206
Incorrect (Story)	48%(40)	31%(26)	43%(39)	35%(29)	134
Probability of equality of proportions p <.1074					
No significant differences between specific grade levels.					
7. Able to identify a visual model of nar text as a story.					
Correct (Story)	54%(45)	65%(55)	69%(63)	91%(75)	238
Incorrect (Poem)	46%(38)	35%(29)	31%(28)	9% (7)	102
Probability of equality of proportions p <.0003					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K					
8. Able to identify a visual model of verse text as a poem.					
Correct (Poem)	49%(41)	48%(40)	52%(47)	77%(63)	191
Incorrect (Story)	51%(42)	52%(44)	48%(44)	23%(19)	149
Probability of equality of proportions p <.0003					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K					
9. Able to identify a poem by title.					
Able to name	17%(14)	33%(28)	45%(41)	68%(56)	139
Unable to name	83%(69)	67%(56)	55%(50)	32%(26)	201
Probability of equality of proportions p <.000002					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K, 2>K					
10. Able to identify the name of a poet.					
Able to name	0% (0)	0% (0)	7% (8)	16%(17)	25
Unable to name	100%(83)	100%(84)	93%(83)	84%(65)	315
P(K-2):2% = P(3):16% p<.00002					
Significant differences: 3>2, 3>1, 3>K					

Note. Variations in results between Table 2 and Table 4 are due to rounding and counting decisions.

Table 5
Grade Level Differences in the Ranking of Poetry Activities
Among Six School-related Activities
According to the Preferences of Young Children

	K	1	2	3
Activity				
Watch a movie	1	1	4	3
Watch a movie	.57	.59	.51	.57
Make an art project	2	2	1	1
Make an art project	.54	.59	.63	.66
LISTEN TO A POEM	3	4	2	4
LISTEN TO A POEM	.54	.47	.61	.56
WRITE A POEM	4	5	3	2
WRITE A POEM	.51	.47	.60	.61
Sing a song	5	6	6	6
Sing a song	.46	.39	.28	.29
Take a Test	6	3	5	5
Take a Test	.37	.49	.39	.30

LISTEN: Chi square statistic = 18.23 with 3 df $p<.0004$
WRITE: Chi square statistic = 24.15 with 3 df $p<.00003$

Note. K(n) = 86, 1st(n) = 82, 2nd(n) = 90, 3rd(n) = 80

effects were noted for both "listen to someone read a poem" and "try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem." Attitudes about these poetry activities did differ at different grade levels. Second and third grade students chose the poetry activities more frequently than those in kindergarten and first grade.

Effects of Participation in Treatment Poetry Program

By comparing the results from the pretest and posttest administrations of the Poetry Concepts and Attitude Questionnaire, it was possible to the answer the third primary research question -- in general, what were the changes in the concepts and attitudes about poetry of young children participating in the treatment poetry program?

Four statistical comparisons used to examine the treatment effects of this study. First since the quasi-experimental design of this study precluded random assignment of individuals to the two groups, the equality of pretest proportions between the treatment and control groups was checked using the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test. Results indicated no initial significant differences between the two groups with the exception of item #6. Secondly, the McNemar Test for Significant Change was conducted on comparisons of pretest and posttest data for the treatment group to test for significant change following exposure to the treatment program. The McNemar Test was also conducted on comparisons of pretest and posttest data for the control group to determine whether young children changed in their concepts and attitudes about poetry without exposure to the treatment program. Finally, the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test was conducted to measure significant differences between the posttest

results of the treatment and control groups.

Treatment effects on concepts about poetry. Comparisons of concept items from the posttest administration of the questionnaire provided an overall picture of the effects the treatment instructional poetry program had on the concepts that young children have about poetry. Table 6 summarizes the results.

Treatment effects on attitudes about poetry. The use of the paired comparisons attitude measure from the posttest administration of the questionnaire provided an overall picture of the effects the treatment instructional poetry program had on the attitudes that young children have about poetry. Table 7 lists the pretest and posttest results for both groups. "Listen to someone read a poem" ranked fourth among the group of six activities for both the treatment and control groups based on pretest results. Posttest results indicated a noticeable shift in the preferences of the treatment children. The activity of "listen to someone read a poem" was ranked second among the six activities following the poetry program. No change was noted in the preferences of the control children. "Try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem" ranked second among the group of six activities for the treatment group and third among the activities for the control group. For the treatment

Table 6
Treatment Effects on Young Children's
Concepts About Poetry

	Treatment		Control	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. Able to define a poem.				
Able to define	74%	93%	76%	85%
Unable to define	26%	7%	24%	15%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0001$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0258$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0238$			
2. Able to identify a difference between a story and a poem.				
Able to identify	74%	90%	77%	85%
Unable to identify	26%	10%	23%	15%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0001$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0060$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .1060$			
3. Able to identify a similarity between a story and a poem.				
Able to identify	68%	81%	66%	81%
Unable to identify	32%	19%	34%	19%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0001$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0010$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .5094$			
4. Able to identify an orally-read rhymed verse as a poem.				
Correct (Poem)	77%	87%	79%	83%
Incorrect (Story)	23%	13%	19%	17%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0060$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .4498$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .1399$			
5. Able to identify an orally-read narrative as a story.				
Correct (Story)	80%	69%	78%	66%
Incorrect (Poem)	20%	31%	19%	34%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0636$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0928$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .3382$			

Table 6 (Continued)
Treatment Effects on Young Children's
Concepts About Poetry

	Treatment		Control	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
6. Able to identify an orally-read unrhymed verse as a poem.				
Correct (Poem)	67%	66%	57%	53%
Incorrect (Story)	33%	34%	43%	47%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .4423$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .7206$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0200$			
7. Able to identify a visual model of nar text as a story.				
Correct (Story)	69%	68%	73%	75%
Incorrect (Poem)	31%	32%	27%	25%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .8097$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .6250$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0800$			
8. Able to identify a visual model of verse text as a poem.				
Correct (Poem)	56%	63%	57%	56%
Incorrect (Story)	44%	37%	43%	44%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .1178$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .4861$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .1290$			
9. Able to identify a poem by title.				
Able to name a poem	42%	79%	40%	45%
Unable to name a poem	58%	21%	60%	55%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0001$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .1272$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0001$			
10. Able to identify the name of a poet.				
Able to name a poet	4%	54%	7%	13%
Unable to name a poet	96%	46%	93%	87%
P (T-Pre) = P (T-Post)	$p < .0001$			
P (C-Pre) = P (C-Post)	$p < .4795$			
P (T-Post) = P (C-Post)	$p < .0001$			

Note. T-Pre(n) = 181, T-Post(n) = 172, C-Pre(n) = 159, C-Post(n) = 153

Table 7
Treatment Effect on the Ranking of Poetry Activities
Among Six School-related Activities
According to the Preferences of Young Children

Activity	Treatment Pre Ranking	Treatment Post Proportion	Control Pre	Control Post
Watch a movie	1	1	2	2
Watch a movie	.59	.58	.58	.57
WRITE A POEM	2	3	3	3
WRITE A POEM	.57	.56	.53	.53
Make an art project	3	4	1	1
Make an art project	.59	.56	.62	.59
LISTEN TO A POEM	4	2	4	4
LISTEN TO A POEM	.51	.58	.52	.50
Take a test	5	5	5	5
Take a test	.40	.34	.37	.43
Sing a song	6	6	6	6
Sing a song	.34	.32	.38	.37

LISTEN: P(T-Post) = P(C-Post) $p<.1603$
WRITE: P(T-Post) = P(C-Post) $p<.3882$

Note. T-Pre(n) = 182, T-Post(n) = 173, C-Pre(n) = 156, C-Post(n) = 153

children, "try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem" dropped from second to third in the rankings. The same activity continued to be ranked third by the control children.

As reported in Table 7, "listen to someone read a poem" was chosen 51% of the time in paired comparisons with the five other school-related activities on the pretest measure and 58% of the time on the posttest measure by the treatment group. For the control group, the activity was chosen 51% of the time on the pretest, but chosen 50% of the time on the posttest. Results of the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test for the Equality of Proportions, however, indicated no significant difference existed between the groups. Informal inspection of those proportions revealed a positive shift in the relative position of "listen to someone read a poem" in comparison to the other activities for the treatment group. Such was not the case with the control group results.

As reported in Table 7, "try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem" was chosen 57% of the time on the pretest measure and 56% of the time on the posttest measure by the treatment group. For the control group, the activity was chosen 53% of the time on the pretest and the posttest. The posttest proportions of the treatment and control groups were not significantly different as indicated by the results of the Irwin-Fisher Exact Test. An informal inspection of those proportions revealed a positive shift in the relative position of "try to make up a rhyme/try to write a poem" for both the treatment and control groups.

Conclusions and Implications

Young Children's Concepts and Attitudes

In summary, the following conclusions about young children's concepts and attitudes about poetry represent a synthesis of the results of this study:

1. Though the majority of young children have developed some concepts about poetry, there are many young children who have only a limited awareness of concepts about poetry.

2. One of the most well-established concepts about poetry that young children have is that poetry is characterized by some degree of rhyming.

3. The degree of rhyming is the primary aural cue used to distinguish between orally-read stories and poems. Many young children become confused when trying to identify stories with rhyming words or poems without rhyming words.

4. Length is the primary visual cue used to distinguish between visual models of narrative and verse text. Many young children believe that stories are longer than poems.

5. Very few young children use obvious text features to distinguish between visual models of narrative and verse text. Looking for the presence of rhyming words is a more frequent strategy than noticing whether the text is arranged in paragraphs or stanzas.

6. The majority of young children could not identify a

poem. As defined by the ability to name an example, the concept of story is significantly better developed in young children. More young children could also correctly identify the orally-read story and the visual model of a story than could correctly identify the orally-read poem and the visual model of the poem.

7. Very few young children could identify a poet. As defined by the ability to name an example, the concept of author is significantly better developed in young children.

8. The expressed preferences of young children would indicate that they feel almost as positive about poetry activities as they do about other school-related activities such as watching a movie or making an art project.

9. The positive attitude that young children have about poetry is also evident in their preferences indicating that poetry activities are liked more than some school-related tasks such as taking a test or singing a song.

Grade Level Differences

In summary, the following conclusions represent a synthesis of the information regarding grade level differences in concepts and attitudes about poetry:

1. Comparisons of young children's poetry concepts seem to give evidence of increased awareness at each grade level.

2. A major shift in the development of poetry concepts

seems to occur between second and third grade.

3. The ability to identify an orally-read story as a story seems to be well-developed by first grade. The ability to cite a difference and a similarity between a poem and a story also seemed to be well-developed by first grade.

4. Concepts related to the use of text features to distinguish visual models of narrative and verse text do not seem to be well-developed until third grade.

5. Even by third grade, the ability to identify orally-read unrhymed verse as a poem was not well-developed.

6. Expressed preferences for poetry activities seemed to indicate a more positive attitude toward poetry at the second and third grade levels.

Treatment Effects

In synthesizing the results of the field test of the treatment poetry program, the following conclusions are offered:

1. Participation in the instructional poetry program had its greatest impact on young children's abilities to define a poem, identify a poem, and identify a poet.

2. Participation in the instructional poetry program also seemed to improve young children's ability to correctly identify an orally-read verse as a poem.

3. Independent of participation in the program,

children in both groups were able to improve the number of attributes they used in their definitions of a poem, and their ability to identify a similarity and a difference between a poem and a story.

4. Independent of participation in the program, children in both groups declined in their ability to identify an orally-read narrative passage as a story.

5. Participation in the instructional poetry program did not impact on the young children's abilities to correctly identify visual models of narrative text as a story or verse text as a poem.

6. Participation in the instructional poetry program did not impact on the young children's ability to identify an orally-read unrhymed verse as a poem.

7. The quantitative analysis conducted on the expressed preferences of young children indicated that participation in the instructional poetry program had a minor impact on young children's attitudes about poetry activities. There was a slight positive gain in the relative rankings of poetry listening activities, but proportions of times chosen remained essentially the same for both groups. (It should be noted that information obtained more informally though qualitative means indicated a variety of observed behaviors in young children which gave stronger evidence of the

positive impact of participation in the program.)

Implications for Educational Practices

One of the main purposes of this study was to provide those educators working with young children with the information they need to plan and implement quality poetry programs in the elementary schools. The following recommendations are based on a synthesis of the information obtained in this study:

1. The primary responsibility for developing poetry concepts may rest with the elementary schools beginning in the early grades. Unlike some other areas of literacy, many young children are not coming to school with developed poetry concepts. Grade level evidence seemed to indicate that development of those concepts was assisted by school experiences with poetry.

2. The evidence in this study indicated that young children did come to school with positive attitudes about poetry activities. To provide young children with a quality poetry program would be one way of sustaining and nurturing this positive disposition toward poetry.

3. The results of this study would indicate that poems selected on the basis of poetry preference research may be effective in an initial poetry program.

4. The results of this study support the need to do

something with poetry on a regular basis. The daily activities used in the treatment poetry program were able to impact on the children's poetry concepts and attitudes.

5. Some "academic" concepts about poetry were obtained through the use of a primarily aesthetic experience. The results suggest that exposing children to poetry may be effective in shaping concepts and attitudes.

6. Exposure alone, however, may not be enough to fully develop desired concepts about poetry in all children. This study suggests that incorporating the use of the terms related to poetry is important if concepts are to be developed.

7. Young children need to be exposed to the text features that visually distinguish different literary forms. This program did not directly expose the children to the visual text and changes in this area were not observed.

8. This study involved a poetry program that required a minimal amount of training, planning time, and implementation concerns; yet it yielded some beneficial results. The Daily Oral Reading of Poetry program may be a useful model for others developing a poetry program. It may also be a suitable alternative to common classroom practices which have been linked to negative attitudes about poetry.

9. Educators would benefit from additional research

focused on poetry instruction. Comparable studies could examine students, methodologies, and timelines different from those investigated in this study. Companion studies using qualitative means to provide additional insights about the impact of programs on teachers and student are also needed.

Opening possibilities which are not to be found through the use of other literary forms, poetry belongs in the lives of young children. This study provides those interested in developing quality poetry programs with useful information concerning young children and poetry. The Daily Oral Reading of Poetry program is a field-tested program which may provide teachers with a method to easily integrate poetry into the daily classroom routine experienced by young children. With this kind of access to poetry, teachers may be able to make a lasting positive impact on the poetry concepts and attitudes of young children.

APPENDIX A:
POETRY CONCEPTS AND ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Poetry Concepts Questionnaire

Student _____ Date surveyed _____
Birthdate/age _____ School/City _____
Grade/Teacher _____ Administered by _____

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1. Tell me what a poem is.

2. How is a poem different from a story?

3. How is a poem the same as a story?

Optional A. (If no answer to 1-3) Do you know what a nursery rhyme is? (Then repeat 1-3 using "nursery rhyme" instead of "poem")

4. Is this more like a poem or a story? (Read a short rhymed verse.) Why?

5. Is this more like a poem or a story? (Read a short narrative story.) Why?

6. Is this more like a poem or a story? (Read a short unrhymed verse.) Why?

7. Does this look more like a poem or a story? (Show a page from a narrative story.) Why?

8. Does this look more like a poem or a story? (Show a page from a multi-stanza poem) Why?

9. Tell me the name of any poem.

10. Tell me the name of any poet. (If inquiry, "A poet is someone that writes poems.")

11. Tell me the name of any story.

12. Tell me the name of any author. (If inquiry, "An author is someone who writes stories.")

Poetry Attitude Paired Comparisons (Grades 2/3) FORM A

1. Would you rather watch a movie or make an art project?

2. Would you rather take a test or sing with a record?

3. Would you rather listen to someone read a poem or try to write a poem?

4. Would you rather take a test or make an art project?

5. Would you rather sing with a record or listen to someone read a poem?

6. Would you rather try to write a poem or watch a movie?

7. Would you rather make an art project or sing with a record?

8. Would you rather listen to someone read a poem or take a test?

9. Would you rather try to write a poem or sing with a record?

10. Would you rather watch a movie or take a test?

11. Would you rather make an art project or listen to somebody read a poem ?

12. Would you rather take a test or try to write a poem?

13. Would you rather sing with a record or watch a movie?

14. Would you rather make an art project or try to write a poem?

15. Would you rather watch a movie or listen to somebody read a poem?

(Note: Paired Comparisons for K/1 used the activities "paint a picture" for "make an art project," "sing a new song" for "sing with a record," and "try to make up a rhyme" for "try to write a poem." Form B of this measure was constructed by reversing the order of the activities in each item.)

APPENDIX B
SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING DAILY ORAL READING OF POETRY LESSONS

(Note: These guidelines were contained in The Daily Oral Reading of Poetry Teacher's Manual and were shared with all treatment teachers during the training session.)

1. Prior to the lessons, review the poetry selection and lesson plan. Practice reading the poem aloud if possible. Decide on a specific listening set and follow-up activity.

2. Secure a quiet large-group setting for the conducting of the Daily Oral Reading of Poetry lesson. If possible, try to incorporate the poetry lesson into a regular daily routine such as large group opening, oral literature, etc.

3. After gaining the attention of the students, set up the poem for the day by using a selected/created listening set.

4. Introduce the poem using the title and poet statement provided in the manual. Use the terms "poem" and "poet."

5. Read the poem with enthusiasm and expression.

6. Following the reading of the poem, use a selected/created follow-up activty. As possible, let the students' reactions guide any follow-up activities.

7. Use any other suggested activities as needed.

8. When possible, rereading a student-selected favorite poem is encouraged.

9. Use the poem selected for the day in the order they are presented in the manual. Introduce one new poem each day.

10. Record lesson information in the Teacher's log as soon as possible after the lesson. Record other poetry activities conducted as a part of normal curriculum. Please note other student behaviors related to poetry activities.

11. During the treatment program, please keep interaction with other teachers regarding the project to a minimum.

THE KEY TO THE PROGRAM IS DAILY EXPOSURE TO GOOD POEMS FROM AN ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHER.

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